**Telehealth**

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*Mama called the doctor and the doctor said:  
No more monkeys jumping on the bed!*

—English language folk song

**Learning Objectives:**
1. Define telehealth and telemedicine.
2. Consider clinical applications for telehealth and the strength of the data supporting its use.
3. Describe the benefits and limitations of telehealth for patients, clinicians, and the healthcare system.
4. Discuss best practices in performing a telemedicine visit.

**Primary Reference:**

**Editor’s Note:** This module explores specific considerations related to telehealth. For a broader discussion about out-of-office communication, refer to the separate chapter “Telephone & Electronic Communication.”

**CASE ONE:**

Kojak is a 20-year-old who comes to your office for follow-up of obesity and hypertension. You've been seeing him every three months for the past year and his weight and blood pressure have stabilized through dietary changes. You are both pleased to see that his blood pressure today is 128/82 and his recent labs revealed a normal lipid profile, HbA1c, and Cr. A lot has changed in his life since your last visit - he has gotten a job as a dental assistant and moved in with his partner that he met in high school. As the next step in his care, he commits to walking 5 days a week after work. As you wrap up the visit, he meekly inquires “Doc, I like seeing you and all, but next time can’t we talk about this stuff on the phone? I had to take the morning off work to be here.”

1. What are telehealth and telemedicine? What might a remote follow-up visit look like for this patient?

**CASE continued:**

You inquire with your practice administrator and discover that your electronic health record (EHR) is equipped with video telemedicine capability.

2. What are specific hardware, software, and environmental considerations prior to conducting a telemedicine visit?
3. How might a provider structure an actual telemedicine visit?

4. For what types of visits is telemedicine most appropriate?

5. What are the downsides of telehealth? What types of visits might be less conducive to telemedicine?

CASE continued:

You contact Kojak via your EHR’s patient portal to inform him that you’ve taken his suggestion – your next visit will be a telemedicine follow-up. You talk with your practice administrator about next steps to make this happen.

6. What are some practice-based factors that need to be considered?

Additional References:

Resources:
1. Telehealth resources from professional medical organizations:
   - ACP - https://www.acponline.org/practice-resources/business-resources/health-information-technology/telehealth